LEE HARVEY OSWALD UNDER ARREST IN DALLAS AFTER KENNEDY ASSASSINATION

FBI

The Oswald Cover-Up

What if Aaron Burr had been a bad shot? What if Lincoln had not attended *Our American Cousin*? Such questions, history's most tantalizing and ironic, are also its most academic and trivial—except in some extraordinary instances. One such instance is now coming to light. The FBI is investigating the previously unrevealed fact that a few days before President Kennedy's assassination on Nov. 22, 1963, Lee Harvey Oswald dropped in at the bureau's Dallas office to deliver a threatening note. Not only did the Dallas FBI fail to put Oswald under surveillance, but FBI officials destroyed the note after Kennedy's death and then withheld all knowledge of the affair from the Warren Commission.

Back in 1964, of course, the FBI told the commission that Oswald and his Russian-born wife Marina were no strangers to the bureau. Both had been the subjects of routine interviews the FBI conducted at that time with people who had lived in Communist countries. Dallas Agent James P. Hosty Jr., who had been keeping an eye on Marina throughout 1963, spoke with her early in November. Hosty told the Warren Commission that Mrs. Oswald had been "quite alarmed" by the interview. He did not mention, however, that Lee Oswald later visited his office, delivering a note warning the FBI to leave his wife alone. The bureau, preparing for Kennedy's trip to Dallas, did give the Secret Service the name of a potentially dangerous person in the area, but it was not Oswald.

Earlier this summer, the astonishing tale came to the attention of Tom Johnson, 33, former assistant press secretary to President Johnson and now publisher of the Dallas *Times Herald*. The *Times Herald* held off publishing its discovery for almost two months to give the FBI a chance to determine its accuracy. The story ran last week, under Johnson's byline, after FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley issued a statement to the *Times Herald* confirming its scoop. "FBI inquiries to date," declared Kelley, "establish that the note contained no references to President Kennedy or in any way would have forewarned of the subsequent assassination." Kelley added that the bureau's investigations "tend to corroborate that shortly after the assassination, the note in question was destroyed." But he did not say who might have destroyed it.

Index Number. FBI sources close to the investigation believe, however, that the note was more ominous than Kelley implied, and that the bureau's inspectors have learned that Oswald specifically threatened to take action against the Government. Just after the assassination, anguished FBI men in Dallas asked their superiors in Washington for guidance about the note. According to present and former FBI officials, John P. Mohr, then the bureau's administrative chief, told the Dallas agents to destroy it. That probably required considerable ingenuity, because the note had been assigned an index number and filed away. Subsequently, a former FBI official told Time, the bureau deliberately concealed what had happened from the Warren Commission. Said this official: "The truth was that the FBI had information that Oswald intended to take action of some kind." Many agents aware of the cover-up—including James Hosty—were reportedly deeply upset.

Mohr, who retired in 1972 after nearly 40 years with the FBI, denies any knowledge of Oswald's note or its disappearance. So too, do his former aides in the administrative division, Nicholas P. Callahan, James B. Adams and Eugene W. Walsh. The continuing FBI investigation is especially sensitive because these men now hold three of the bureau's five top jobs. Many agents, in fact, believe that the trio actually runs the FBI—with a little behind-the-scenes counsel from Mohr.

62-109060-7302X